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U.S. and Marcos: Difference of Opinion on Whether There's a Crisis

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MANILA, Nov. 1 — Statements by President Ferdinand E. Marcos and the testimony of a growing number of critics of his Government both here and abroad have produced strikingly different interpretations of the political and security situation in the Philippines.

News Mr. Marcos says the reports he is receiving in his study in Malacanang Palace tell him that the Communist rebellion is under control and that his personal popularity is high.

Analysis These reports are completely at odds with the assessments of many Filipino politicians, churchmen and business leaders, and with the testimony being presented this week by diplomats and intelligence agencies at Congressional hearings in Washington.

Officials in Washington have said recently that the Communist insurgency is growing and that unless the Philippine Government enacts major reforms, the country could face a widespread civil war. Today in Washington, Senator Dave Durenberger, Republican of Minnesota, who heads the Senate Intelligence Committee, said President Marcos was incapable of introducing reforms and should step down.

'Tell Me the Truth'

But Mr. Marcos said in an interview Thursday that he was unlike the Shah of Iran, whose country crumbled into anarchy before he could fully grasp the situation. Instead, Mr. Marcos said, he is in constant touch with all portions of the nation and familiar with the concerns of even the smallest towns.

"When I receive a report and it sounds funny, it's too good, I immediately have it checked," he said. "I check it myself. I tell them: 'Tell me the truth. You're talking to the President now.'"

According to Mr. Marcos, the Communist rebellion that is causing so much worry outside Malacanang is pale by comparison with two insurgencies defeated in the 1960's and 1970's.

Mr. Marcos rarely leaves Malacanang, where he receives the visitors,

reads the reports and makes the telephone calls that give him the information on which he bases his policies. He said he collated it on a personal computer.

He is an early-morning man, who begins receiving visitors before most of the rest of his Government has opened its doors. He works through until 3 or 4 P.M., when he has a bowl of soup and a nap.

On Thursday, the President's morning included meetings with the American Ambassador, Stephen W. Bosworth; a legal adviser who among other things is involved in the trial of those accused of assassinating the opposition leader Benigno S. Aquino Jr.; a businessman seeking endorsement of a golf tournament, and an American reporter.

During the interview, Mr. Marcos said much of his assessment of the situation derived from his own experience, and he talked at length about his experiences in World War II and with the previous insurgencies. Those involved the Communist Hukbalahap rebellion, which had its origins in the period during and after World War II and flared again in the late 1960's, and the Moslem Moro National Liberation Front, a group active into the 1970's.

His Own Relationships

In discussing the Communist insurgents of today, the New People's Army, he also discussed his own past relationships with some of its leaders, although the man he quoted at some length, Jose Maria Sison, has been in prison for more than a decade and is no longer at the forefront of the fight.

In his analysis of the military situation, Mr. Marcos harked back to lessons he learned as a soldier fighting the Japanese during World War II. "When I was fighting underground," he said at one point, "you know, the moment there is a surrender, that unit is com-

pletely wiped out. It's no longer effective."

The President seemed to be in a mood to reminisce, and at times he seemed to be more comfortable talking about the past than the present. His eyes sometimes took on an abstracted look and it was difficult to interrupt his train of thought.

His attention became most firmly fixed, and his answers most direct and concise, when he was asked about his health. He insisted he was basically healthy, but the subject was clearly at the forefront of his mind. He discussed his ailments — a kidney condition and a limp in his left leg — in detail.

He tied his ailments, too, with the past, saying they came from war wounds that have never fully healed. Microscopic shrapnel in one kidney, he said, once brought him close to a serious operation, and makes necessary the regular attention of doctors.

In contrast to the repeated warnings from Washington that social and economic reforms are urgent, Mr. Marcos seemed to see the Communist insurgency primarily in military terms. He spoke authoritatively of numbers of troops and battlefield deployments.

He appeared to take pride in his own military background and indicated that there was a rapport between him and his field officers as men of action, the sort of men he described as "restless when they are not in combat and not doing anything."